

## **Self Transformation of Gauri in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland***

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### **Abstract**

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the prominent names in Diasporic Literature. In Jhumpa Lahiri's work *The Lowland* (2013), the idea of personality is especially significant, and various characters can be broke down as needs are. An Indian lady Gauri, being a widow and hitched to her previous spouse's sibling, is the principal character. Gauri starts to discover her new, different (possible present or future) personalities after relocating to America. In this way, the paper targets discussing how the personality of Gauri changes across the novel based on identity transformation, which indicates Gauri as a diasporic character. The discussion is established on the theory of identity. It shows how relocation transforms into transparency and affects Gauri's character.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Identity, Personality, Self, Transformation

### **Introduction**

"Identity" is one of the features of diaspora literature. Although the literature is not described, many theoretical concepts can be successfully used for discussions about real people and their behaviour and the analysis and characteristics of literature. Identity theory is mostly based on symbolic interactionism and perceptual control theory, so there is no new theory. However, this paper does not focus on these but on some of the basic sociology and social psychology principles used in identity theory. Jhumpa Lahiri's book and her novel *The Lowland* highlight the issue of identity.

For this paper, Gauri was selected to investigate and analyse her complex identity. She changes throughout the novel as she lives in some place. Lahiri has Indian roots, and she often describes the characters migrating from India to other countries and the many challenges that immigrants or families of immigrants face as they grow up in the United States. She is considered an American author of novels and short stories. Lahiri's life, particularly in the United States, Rhode Island, and Boston, can influence the story about Gauri.

### **Identity Conjecture**

It is very difficult to explain the concept of identity. Because the development of the style is ongoing, and the identity is always changing. Rosemary Rich added that individuals are actively participating in the formation of their identities. Thus, a person's identity depends on several decisions he or she will make consciously or unconsciously. Of course, people can't talk about one identity because everyone has multiple identities. Thus, as the word "self" is used, all "self" consists of a person's various identities.

Like many Burke and Stets concepts of identity, Grossberg is a fragment of identity with many identities in "identity multiplicity" because identities are made up of partial parts and are always inconsistent. It refers to the phenomenon of concentrating on the conversion.

Therefore the concept of mixed identity sometimes works, especially when it involves many countries and ethnic groups. In short, the self h can be seen as a puzzle because it has many diverse components of identity since it has many pieces which are different identities that are put together. In contrast to the puzzle image, which is always the same as when assembled, the self is subject to change depending on the situation, based on the self's identity. They sometimes coexist inconsistently with each other and change their identities at different times. It is important to emphasise that people can obtain support for these identities through negotiations with others accustomed to many of their identities. Stets and Burke refer to this process as "identity Verification" (Stets and Burke 2014, 62). These checks are required concerning both current and future identities, but different identities can be negotiated with other individuals or groups of individuals. There are other identities available to the present individual that can be seen in the near or far future as much as possible. Identity not only affects the person who owns it, but it also affects others.

A person can have several identities, but Sabine Trepte maintains that not all identities are equal. In other words, certain identities may be essential than others in all circumstances or depending on the environment in which one is involved at one time, the

value of specific identities could fluctuate. One's identity as a mother can be essential at all times in all circumstances. However, her identity as a teacher may not look particularly important when at home, but it does not always indicate that it is vital for a person who is both a teacher and a mother. Some identities might be more dominating than others, in other words. Predominant identity substitutes some different core social identity and has become the most distinctive and actual identity in the social identity system. Such an identity is sometimes referred to as the most prominent.

Although a person could have more than one identity, these different identities are not activated simultaneously. The most dominant or outstanding identity will have a higher probability of activation in various situations. In contrast, not so prominent identities may only be active in a certain context and may be modified by more notable factors. Identities are not stable, and they continue to change as described. This transition takes place when meaning changes through time in one's identity.

Consequently, changes in identity can take place not fast but over a lengthy period. Normally less prominent and committed identities can alter or change more than more prominent or committed identities. Although transformation in identity is a process, it is almost chronologically detailed how different identities gain or lose their prominence.

### **Gauri's Transformation of Identity**

After Subhash's marriage, he comes to live with Gauri, an indigenous person who is one of the main characters in the narrative. She is twenty-third years old and five months pregnant; therefore, Subhash is a husband and a dad. He planned to marry the widow of his brother Udayan. Subhash didn't want to know much about Udayan, who was murdered by police since he was involved in one political activity. Subhash wants to safeguard Gauri against both risks linked to the activities of his brother and his parents, who have not treated Gauri kindly.

Meanwhile, to Gauri, this marriage is "a way to remain in touch with Udayan" (Lahiri 2013, 150). So that Two brothers share commonalities and a manner of starting a new life in a space where none of them knows anything, including their previous wedding and the biological father of their child. Indeed, while living in India, Gauri seems to be presented as a quite passive character who does not make decisions or fight for their happiness. But she explores various possibilities in the United States and gradually takes her life into its own hands by choosing to become the person she wishes to be. A need for transformation could

relate to her husband's devastating loss Udayan. This piece, however, does not utilise trauma studies and hence presents the novel through identity theory in a different manner.

In the novel, Lahiri in question, identity and the Indian-American setting are of prime importance. Gauri is full of amazement at her initial impressions of America, and things are hard to explain. For instance, her understanding of English is tough. While she has been studying English, she can't understand the news on the radio in Subhash's automobile.

In addition, she witnessed food coming from "icy packets from the freezer that slowly melted and revealed their contents during the day" (Lahiri 2013, 153).

Moreover, while she goes shopping alone, she purchases cream cheese but thinks it is chocolate and eats everything. She accepts her new environment as something better for her child and her future, even though she has many misunderstandings. This means that Gauri after she arrives in America sees herself mostly as a mother who seeks to secure her unborn and willing kid a pleasant future existence. Gauri first spent most of her time at home because Subhash is at work but soon starts to visit locations close by herself. She sees the university and is astonished that she may go freely on campus since no one stops her "No armed soldiers sitting on sandbags, as they had for months outside the main building at Presidency" (Lahiri 2013, 155). Eventually, the campus will be Gauri's nice location to stay. When she finds the philosophy department and attends an undergraduate class to listen, she becomes an unofficial student. She even notes at the margins of her journal because she has no paper but rewrites it all at home properly. Gauri goes to classes twice a week covertly and uses Subhash's identity card to read in a library. Gauri's identity as a student begins to take shape at this point since her intellectual activity engages her and helps her fill the time she has available, given that she has no friends and the baby has yet to arrive. Gauri sees many women who appear extremely different from her in her classes and on-campus in general because she wears garments she purchased from India, such as saris. She seems to appreciate other women's appearances to the point where she wants to change her appearance to look like them. Gauri doesn't consider anybody to change her wishes. Probably she does not intend to change on a certain day but unexpectedly makes this decision. Once Subhash returns home, Gauri finds her hair and her saris and other things cut out. Gauri isn't there. But she answers when she returns and asks why she did so "I was tired of it" (Lahiri 2013, 167). She does not wonder whether or not Subhash likes her new appearance, which means that she won't ask anyone to approve of her altering identity. Since that time, Gauri has dressed like other American women of her age have exaggerated breasts, etc., with tight clothing. In other

words, Gauri has, as a non-official student and a less Indian but at least more American in terms of hair and dress, two identities since her time in America. Her second identity is wholly new, while her Bachelor may see the former of Philosophy in India as an identity. After her education, identity lost its origin. She has returned to play a significant role in the level of identification.

The reader may expect Gauri to change parenting again because she would have another role to play, she thought and was willing to play in America at the beginning of her existence. Yet Gauri doesn't enjoy her identities as a mother despite her relief that her infant is nothing like her dead man and that she isn't even a male.

Gauri's mother was sick and could not care for her children, so Gauri and her brethren Manash lived with their grandparents, aunts, and uncles from their village in town. Later, since they had to start school, it made it logical for them to stay there. At the age of sixteen, the parents of Gauri died. Therefore she was living with her brother and later her wife and children with two uncles. Since rural life had no pleas for her, Gauri chose to live in the metropolis. Gauri having grown up with her family instead of her parents, and now she's got her child, but she's doing so as if it's another person. Considering the background information, Gauri may be represented as a character that doesn't know how a mother behaves because she doesn't know how her mother behaves. Nor was she powerful, and she felt disregarded. She had no money to spend a while alone with her mother or father, even in such a house in such a remote region. This could have caused a trauma she has suppressed and could never overcome. Initially, she planned for her child a good future, but being a mother is not a distinctive identity for Gauri because raising Bela does not represent her life. Although Gauri had no other visible exceptional identity in those days, it was obvious that being a mother would not turn into one. Only years later will it become an important aspect of the self.

In this work, Lahiri also focuses on Gauri's sexual identity. Gauri didn't feel attractive before meeting Udayan. Even before his death, Udayan did not know he was going to be a dad. The subject of sex is out of issue when Gauri marries Subhash because they are more like friends instead of wedded pair. But Subhash doesn't realise that, despite not being close, Subhash takes the marriage seriously. Later on, they talk about sex, but Gauri wants to wait for her kid to be born. Finally, there's a time when Gauri realises that she can't help but inform Subhash that she's willing to have sex with him. That is, Gauri's connection with Subhash develops in inverse order: first, they marry, and then they become lovers. Nobody

seems to like it at first, but later she starts to guide her hand where and how she wishes to be grabbed. She is a reawakened sexuality and can no longer be viewed as a passive figure. She has realised that a loving act has nothing to do with it. She was different from her heart and her body. Gauri watches even for another male she sees on campus, sometimes. She previously couldn't have been thinking of something like this. She doesn't like him at first, then later she gets attracted to him and begins to prepare for future meetings, but she never speaks. She even follows him to see another woman kiss him. Gauri feels deceived but simultaneously excited, so she masturbates on campus in the restroom.

Furthermore, many years later, when she lives in California, possibly in Los Angeles, when she becomes involved with Lorna, a graduate pupil, she explores her lesbian identity. She doesn't remember crossing a boundary that pushed her to want the body of a woman. Already on the other side, she found herself with Lorna. In short, it is not least complicated that Gauri's sexual identity is overall and continues to change. Suppose she stayed in Calcutta in Tollygunge. She would never have wary of experimenting with it. In other words, migration affects Gauri since migration is an eye-opening experience for it, although it does not appear to be at first. Its identity is altering and increasingly encompasses itself. This is why this experience could be considered a kind of renaissance.

The reader may question the impact of Gauri's decisions, but the narrative does not judge their decisions by this character. It does not appear to be the case, however. On the contrary, she decided to leave her spouse and husband, albeit this lasts only for a few decades but not for the rest of her life. This turning point permits Lahiri to concentrate on other characters of the tale at the same time. Only decades later, when Gauri is about sixty years old. The author comes back to the topic of Gauri, and the reader is probably not astonished to know that she achieved so much as a scholar. Since the first job, she had gone north momentarily to Santa Cruz and then San Francisco. She had not always been in one spot after she had left Rhode Island. Finally, however, she returned to Southern California to live her life. Subhash and Bela learn to survive without Gauri in their lives, despite different hardships, while Gauri does not look behind as she searches for herself.

Gauri is a bearer of a green card that sees the opportunity to be an American. To be retired, she needs to become an American to simplify her life. However, although she would become an American, she would still be a woman who spoke English with a foreign accent, despite her Western clothing and intellectual interests, whose physical aspect and colours were unorthodox and in the face of most of the Americas. A long time ago, her desire to look

American as far as hair and clothing were concerned, but decades later, she only realised that she saw herself as more American and less Indian, not as other people. Outsiders regard her not as an American woman, and in all these years, she hasn't mingled. Her passport tells her that she is an Indian and that her passport might change in the future. Although she did reside in America longer than in India, she would never be an American. Gauri has succeeded in accomplishing her objectives about her intellectual identity in another way, yet her Indian and American identities are conflicting. His paper is focused on a more broad sense than just the ethnic identification of Gauri, which appears to be more complicated at the end of the roman when Lahiri analyses his fictional works.

Gauri is to leave in London for a conference, but she notices that she will not participate and will instead catch a flight to India as soon as she lands. The action is probably taken because of Gauri's identity problem, for his identities as an American are uncertain. In addition, his identities as a wife and mother become significant again, which have not been outstanding for two decades. For example, she often says it has no kids, but she once told a couple at the hotel that she has a girl and she is still waiting for the little children when she breaks her arm and takes a weekend off.

But Gauri, like other people, do not accept a wife and mother identities since Subhauri divorces her for marrying another person, while Bela believes that Gauri is dead to her. As a result, these identities must be negotiated, although they could be too late, unlike her other identities. Only to hear that the Subhash isn't at home, Gauri returns to Rhode Island and sees Bela and her daughter Meghna, to who her grandma presents Gauri as a friend. That's what makes her aunt. Since her grandmother died, she hadn't seen her.

Since she was Bela's mother years ago, Gauri is not allowed now to be a grandmother. It once more disturbs Gauri's well-constructed identity. A journey to India may be a way to return to their roots and to realise who Gauri is, to rethink her identity, in other words. She'd visit the sites that have been in her memories all this year in Calcutta. Her expectations vary from reality because everything has changed, and even Udayan, her first husband, has been incarcerated. That journey does not allow her to feel better or understand herself, and Gauri even considers suicide. One leg, then the other, she imagined swinging. She, however, does not act and returns to America, for answers to her issues of identity can probably only be discovered there, as she must re-evaluate the significance of several identities. After all, she can even be granted an opportunity to be a grandma. So there is hope for a good future towards the end of the tale.



## Conclusion

In brief, Gauri defines her whole identity in America. She changes as she moves from town to country, leaves her family, learns about new people, and preserves other values. Such shift seems deliberate, and as Gauri believes, no negotiations on the many identities of her new self are required. Her most prominent identity is the intellectual, although she also wants to be more American and less Indian and thinks that she succeeds. Although much later, when several times go, and it's too late, as Subhash and Bela no longer need Gauri, Gauri would like in their life, especially as a mother and grandma. More importantly, although Gauri has been in Calcutta at the end of her novel for days. She is not embracing her Indian identity because this return is yet another disappointment that refers to the destructive part of the self rather than to the understanding of itself, and understands that, at the same time, she is not as American as she thought. Her identity is, therefore then between Americans and Indians. The end of the novel promises the recovery of some of the identities that Gauri gave up. That highlights the entire idea of identity because identity is never fixed and continues to change: some identities lose their origin and some others source. In Lahiri's book *The Lowland*, it is always possible to pursue future identities as Gauri does. Gauri shows that she does not negotiate a complex identity in either the U.S. or India. To be happy, she realises that she will have to arrange portions of it but does not regret decisions she has taken on the other hand.

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